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STATE DEPT FOR WHA/CCA

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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [SOCI](#) [CU](#)

SUBJECT: IN HAVANA, A (MOSTLY) HAPPY FOURTH OF JULY

Classified By: COM Michael Parmly for Reason 1.4(d).

11. (C) Summary: Baseball trumped politics in Havana on July 4, with nearly 600 people attending USINT Havana's baseball-themed Independence Day celebration at the Chief of Mission's Residence. Civil-society figures, including Cuba's most prominent dissidents, mingled with third-country diplomats and chomped on hot dogs and popcorn while enjoying baseball-themed music, videos and entertainment. Parking restrictions imposed by the Cuban Government forced many guests to walk up to ten minutes to reach the Residence, but this did little to dampen enthusiasm for the festivities. Earlier in the day, 23 pro-democracy activists gathered at the home of dissident Roberto de Miranda to mark Independence Day, and called for free elections. In a reminder of the lack of basic freedoms in Cuba, police stopped and questioned a dissident who had bumped into Poloff at a shopping center. End Summary.

12. (C) USINT Havana treated nearly 600 guests to a July 4th celebration at the COMR that featured baseball-themed food, music and videos, as well as a home-run derby, an address by the COM and a reenactment of Abbott and Costello's "Who's on First?" The Cuban Government, which had denied USINT the use of a nearby parking lot, banned parking along the little-used streets bordering the Residence. Consequently, almost all visitors to the COMR had to park on side streets and spend five to ten minutes walking to the Residence. The inconvenience irked some third-country diplomats but served as a reminder of the bureaucratic difficulties faced by USINT personnel. Overall, the reception was a big success. Our Cuban guests were enthusiastic about the baseball theme, including the giveaway baseballs, baseball cards and material donated by Major League Baseball. Also popular were the calendars featuring Cubans who starred in the Majors.

13. (C) Earlier on July 4, on the other side of Havana, 23 Cuban pro-democracy activists gathered at the home of former political prisoner Roberto de Miranda and issued a signed statement celebrating the 230th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. The activists, from as far away as Camaguey, called for free elections and told Poloff they were waiting for the Cuban people to be freed from the culture of fear that permeates Cuban society. During the gathering, two Dutch tourists arrived with books for De Miranda's library, explaining that they were acting as couriers on behalf of a Dutch NGO. (Cuban authorities did not interrupt the meeting or visit De Miranda's home later that day.) On July 3, eleven dissidents in Havana province held what they described as a 4th of July celebration that included a call for the liberation of political prisoners.

14. (C) Dissident Niurka Brito, who lost her job as a milk-industry executive after blowing the whistle on corruption, was stopped in the street and questioned by

police July 4 after a chance encounter with Poloff at a shopping center. Fifteen minutes after Brito and Poloff ended their five-minute conversation, three uniformed police officers stopped Brito and questioned her about her activities. Poloff witnessed the stop and heard the lead police officer tell Brito, who was carrying two transparent bags of fruit, that he had stopped her to check for "cocaine or explosives." Brito was later allowed to return home. (Note: On July 5, Brito told Poloff that the previous day, while walking home, she was approached and roughed up by other police officers. End Note.)

15. (SBU) The Cuban regime "observed" July 4 by organizing a concert of American music for the official guild of writers and artists (UNEAC). Cuban radio transmitted the official line that "Anti-imperialism is not to be misconstrued as anti-Americanism."
PARMLY